

SECURITY INFORMATION

# INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Thailand

SUBJECT Chinese Influence in Rural Thailand

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1. The Chinese have always been a problem in Thailand. It dates back to the earliest Siamese days. The tendency was for the Chinese to smother the people about them with custom and commerce. They are good citizens but they remain Chinese. A generation ago the problem was not so acute because the Chinese came alone, married Siamese women, and the children were brought up as Siamese. Thus they were assimilated in the Thai population. However, for about the past 20 years, the immigrating Chinese has been bringing his family with him and they remain Chinese in thought and spirit.
2. About 1948, there was an immigration arrangement permitting about 10,000 Chinese per month. Recently it has been cut to, I believe, about 2,000 per year which is more or less in line with the quota of other nations. However, the number of illegal entries is impossible to estimate and it is impracticable to patrol the mountain area in the north of Siam or the long coast line in the south where most of the illegal entries seem to take place.
3. The Chinese, being of a family clan type, have established a pattern whereby one family immigrates, establishes itself in the country, and then arranges for the balance of the relations to come in either legally or illegally.
4. The Chinese in Siam might be divided into four classes: the Swatows, who have a natural tendency to be merchants, the Hainanens and the Hokkas, a sort of gypsy Chinese.
5. In Pitsanulok, which is a typical small Thai village, the Chinese are the commercial people of the village. Few of them go in for farming and the ones that do usually are engaged in vegetable or pig raising products that they can sell readily in the town market. Probably 90 per cent of the business in the central market place is controlled by the Chinese. In the outlying small villages, they do a much smaller percentage. The one bank in the town, a branch of the Bangkok Bank, is 100 per cent staffed by Chinese and the manager is also Chinese who also operates a rice mill and two insurance companies.

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6. There are two prominent Chinese associations in Pitsanulok. The Swatow group is a highly respected, influential group in the town. They have a splendid building for the Association which serves as a sort of club house with facilities for billiard tables and theatre. They possess the only usable piano in the town, have a band, and sponsor basketball games. When the governor was approached and asked to suggest members to a committee to head up a proposed leprosarium, he immediately suggested several members of the Chinese association. There is also a second and less prominent Chinese association in the town composed of the Hainanens.
7. As the government considers natives of Thailand to be Thai, many Chinese merchants register their property in the name of their children, born in Thailand, to comply with nationality regulations.
8. Chinese is the commercial language of the country. Although there is a regulation that certain invoices, etc, be in Thai, usually the Chinese merchant uses Chinese unless requested otherwise. Sometimes printed invoice headings are in both Thai and Chinese.
9. The Chinese make every effort to hold to their language. There are two Chinese schools in Pitsanulok and although such schools are not to run beyond the fourth grade, the ruling is circumvented by having a 4B, 4C, and 4D grade which, in reality, is a fifth, sixth, and seventh grade. The exclusive attendance at a primary Chinese school is sometimes against the Chinese child when he tries to continue his schooling in a Thai school and finds he has but a limited ability to read and write in Thai. Both the Chinese schools in Pitsanulok are well attended. Then, of course, there is the teaching of Chinese in the home. I had one Chinese student in our school that always came late to class. When finally questioned, he revealed that he always had to study his Chinese at home an hour before coming to class and this frequently caused his tardiness.
10. Many of the adult Chinese have a very meager knowledge of Thai: sometimes it is limited to what might be termed market language, the ability to count, "yes" and "no", and little more.
11. The Thai Government felt at one time that they might overcome this Chinese tendency to hold on to their language by requiring the youngsters to get their primary education [the first four grades] in Thai, which is considerably easier to learn than Chinese. Thus, with the children having acquired one language, they would not have any inclination to learn Chinese. However, with the early training at home in Chinese and the Chinese schools operating, this idea has not worked out as planned and this is particularly true in towns outside of Bangkok.
12. Chinese newspapers are available throughout Siam as well as Chinese literature. Movies carry both Thai and Chinese dialogue flashed along the side of the screen for US made movies. There are also Chinese movies shown. There is always agitation for more Chinese language radio broadcasting and China stations can readily be tuned in.
13. The Chinese, as workers, are preferred to the Thai. They do better and more work and, consequently, demand a better wage. For example, a Thai carpenter in Pitsanulok receives about US\$1.00 per day while a Chinese carpenter can demand about US\$3.00 a day. [In Bangkok, a Chinese carpenter earns from US\$5.00 to \$6.00 a day. A Thai school teacher earns from US\$30.00 to \$50.00 a month]
14. The Thai people do not seem to want any more Chinese, Communist or non-Communists. They realize that the commercial interests of the country are in the hands of the Chinese and there is little they can do about it. However, there is no apparent discrimination against the Chinese already in Thailand.

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